PEDIATRICS.

UNDER THE CHARGE OF

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Retarded Cerebral Development due to other than Cerebral Causes.—ERNEST LAPLACE (*Penna. Med. Jour.*, January, 1907, p. 277) refers to a class of children whose heredity is not shrouded in suspicion and whose environment likewise is good, but who, nevertheless, are backward and are mentally and physically below par. They are slow in retaining mental impressions, they show little or no tendency to learn to talk, suffer with a variety of nervous phenomena, and have every evidence of imperfect nutrition; they are mouth breathers, and present exacerbations of temperature, which depress more or less the nervous system. With the exclusion of abnormality in the shape or development of the head, and of the history of a previous meningitis, the examination of these children reveals with wonderful frequency the presence of three abnormal conditions, namely, postnasal and pharyngeal adenoids, tongue-tie, and phimosis.

The pathological results of these deformities can be classified as follows: (1) From the adenoids, improper and insufficient aeration of the blood, resulting in insufficient combustion and imperfect general nutrition, and impairment of hearing resulting in sluggishness and lack of interest. (2) From the tongue-tie, a hampered condition of the tongue in its attempts to articulate. (3) From the phimosis, an attendant reflex irritation of the nervous system and the general depression which soon follows.

A number of such patients have come to Laplace's attention. Almost without exception boys present the combined defects mentioned. The condition has not been found proportionately as frequent among girls, inasmuch as the tongue-tie and adenoids would be the only causative elements. Surgical correction of these frequently associated defects, carried out in 82 cases under Laplace's care, has been followed by most encouraging results, and seems to confirm his suspicion that this strange coincidence of defects in the same patient often contributes an important factor in the retardation of mental progress.

Tetany Considered as an Intoxication by the Salts of Calcium.—W. STOELZNER (*Jahrb. f. Kinderheilk.*, 1906, xiii, 661) states that Finkelstein has called attention to the fact that frank or latent tetany can be influenced by diet. He has observed that with such patients the galvanic hyperexcitability of the nerves, as well as most of the other symptoms, are aggravated by the administration of cows' milk. On the contrary, after purgation and institution of a watery diet, the phenomena disappear completely in the course of twenty-four hours. Cereals prepared without milk act in the same way. But if after this amelioration cows' milk is given the symptoms reappear. In investigating the cause of this action of cows' milk Finkelstein has been able to establish the fact that casein, butter fat, sugar of milk, and even human milk, when added to cereals, are without action on the tetany. On the contrary, the serum of cows' milk acts exactly in the same fashion as whole milk—whence he has concluded that tetany is determined by a disturbance in the nutritive processes depending probably upon the assimilation of the phosphates or the calcium salts. This point has been made the subject of Stolzner's study of the galvanic excitability of the peripheral nerves in infants affected with tetany, before and after the administration of cows' milk or the calcium salts.

While the 12 cases reported by the author are not equally significant it seems conclusive that the administration of cows' milk or the calcium salts caused a manifest exaggeration of the excitability of the peripheral nerves, while this effect was wanting when, as a control, these infants received phosphate of sodium, lactate of iron, acetate of potassium, chloride of sodium, or magnesia.

The mechanism of this action of the calcium salts in producing or exaggerating the symptoms of tetany is thus explained by Stoelzner:

Tetany is exceptional with the breast-fed infant, but is almost always observed with infants nourished by cows' milk, which contains five times more calcium than human milk. The absorption and elimination of calcium salts being effected by the intestinal mucosa, it is evident that this organ is subjected to a superalimentation, which is aggravated if there are digestive disturbances, or if there is rachitis, in which the bones imperfectly utilize the calcium absorbed. It may, therefore, result with infants nourished with cows' milk, whether or not they become dyspeptic or rachitic, that the intestine can become functionally insufficient in eliminating the calcium salts and thus lead to a retention manifesting itself clinically by tetany. It remains to be proved whether in such cases the blood and organs are surcharged with calcium salts, a point upon which so far no researches have been made.

A Vegetable Broth Useful in Gastro-enteritis.—BAILEY (*Gaz. hebd. des Sci. méd.*, June 2, 1906) gives a recipe for a broth which may be used with advantage when it is necessary to interdict milk as a food in case of milk infection: Carrots, 65 grams; potatoes, 5 grams; turnips, 25 grams; dry peas or dry haricot beans, 25 grams, for each liter of water. Cook well and strain, adding 5 grams of salt per liter.

The Alimentary Regimen of Measles.—E. RAMUS (*Régime alimentaire à instituer dans la rougeole, Thèse de Paris*, 1906) makes some valuable suggestions as to diet of children suffering from measles, based upon a study of urinary elimination and the weight. Dividing the duration of the disease into periods of four days each, counting from the day of eruption, Ramus has observed that the quantity of urine passes through three phases: First, a phase of oliguria corresponding to the first period of the disease; a second phase of polyuria coincident with the second period; and a third, covering the last two periods, in which the quantity increases, diminishes, or remains stationary. This curve, which is more